

Wilderness Inquiry, Federal Agencies Pledge to Make Public Lands and Waters More Accessible

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, together with other federal resource agencies, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Wilderness Inquiry on the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and pledged to make America's public lands and waters more accessible for Americans of all abilities.

Wilderness Inquiry is a non-profit agency that promotes the responsible enjoyment of public lands and waters and provides opportunities for people with disabilities and other non-traditional recreation seekers to use and enjoy these resources. The federal agencies have been entrusted with the care of federal lands and waters and are responsible for managing, maintaining and protecting these resources for the public good.

Wilderness Inquiry and the agencies agreed in effect to engage in cooperative, interagency efforts to increase consistency in management of outdoor recreation and assure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

In addition, each one has an interest in enhancing public appreciation and knowledge about the use and stewardship of public waters and their surrounding environments. All have an interest in promoting safety awareness on or near public lands and waters while acknowledging that it is the responsibility of each individual to understand and accept risks associated with outdoor activities.

Wilderness Inquiry has a program that focuses on integrating people from diverse backgrounds and ability levels and has established services which foster dignity, independence and social integration. In particular, Wilderness Inquiry:

- Conducts trips and experiences and experiences involving integrated groups on public lands and related waters;
- Develops written materials and adapted equipment to facilitate use and enjoyment of public lands and related waters by persons with disabilities.
- Promotes responsible use of public lands and related waters by all people, including people with disabilities.
- Conducts training on issues pertaining to serving people with disabilities.

The other federal agencies signing the agreement include the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service.